

8982
178

A
C H A R G E,

DELIVERED TO THE
CLERGY of the Archdeaconry of ST. ALBANS,

AT
A VISITATION HOLDEN MAY 22d, 1783.

By the Rev. SAMUEL HORSLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

Published (with Additions) at the Request of the CLERGY.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :
PRINTED FOR J. ROBSON, IN NEW BOND STREET.
1783.

OF THE
MUSEUM OF THE
CITY OF LONDON

AT
THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF LONDON

BY
J. H. M. J. L. D. F. R. S.



THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF LONDON

THE SECOND EDITION

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY J. H. M. J. L. D. F. R. S.

A

C H A R G E, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

THE Business of the Christian Priesthood, like that of every secular occupation, consisting in two branches, the Speculative, and the Practical; if any of us, by a particular blessing of providence attending our temporal fortunes, are released from the necessity, to which the greater part submit, of a severe and constant toil in the practical branch of the profession, as the labour by which they have to earn their daily bread; it seems to be their particular duty to consecrate the leisure they enjoy, if I may borrow an expression from the profane sciences, to the Theory of Religion. And in the present state of religious learning in this country, it should seem that the cultivation of that branch of it, which is called Sacred Criticism, and particularly the elucidation of the text of the Old Testament, by a diligent use of the materials which the unwearied industry of a learned critic, supported by the munificence of the best of princes, hath

A

sup-

supplied, is the study in which, of all others, our talents and our industry might be best employed. It is however to be remembered, that the writings of the Old Testament are only of a secondary importance; for the evidence which they afford of the truth of our Lord's pretensions, and for the light which they throw upon the doctrines of the gospel; which is indeed so great, that an inattention to these more ancient parts of the code of Revelation, is likely to be one principal cause of the scepticism, which unhappily prevails among our modern sectaries, concerning the original dignity of the Redeemer's nature, and the expiatory virtue of his sufferings. But in whatever degree the Jewish scriptures may be useful for the general confirmation of Christianity; it is from their relation to the gospel, to which, we have been told by the highest authority, the Mosaic dispensation was but a prelude and preparative, that they derive the whole of the importance which they yet retain. A profound and critical acquaintance with them is useful only as means conducive to an end: and in this, as in other cases, every solid advantage will be lost, that might be reaped from the improvement of the means, if in the too assiduous pursuit of these, we lose sight of the end to which they should be made subservient. The Theology of the Christian revelation is the great object, to which every other branch of sacred literature is naturally subordinate. To extract it from the writings of the apostles and evangelists, connected with the earlier revelations,

to

to assert and defend their genuine doctrine, to preserve it entire, and to maintain it in its native purity, unadulterated by the additions of superstition, undebased and undiminished by the refinements of philosophy; this is the great business to which those of us, who feel themselves at ease and in affluence, and masters of the leisure which affluence affords, should consider their talents and their studies to be solemnly devoted.

My Reverend Brethren, I would be understood to speak with sentiments of respect, of those whom I shall take the liberty to call the labouring part of the parochial clergy: of those whose lives are spent, in a constant attendance on the public ceremonies of external worship, or in the charitable and necessary business of instructing the people of the lower ranks in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Of these venerable men, of their godly labours and honourable occupations, I would be understood to speak with reverence and respect. Of all the departments of the sacred office, the business of that which it is their lot to fill, is perhaps the most immediately conducive to general edification: and for the zeal and ability with which it is discharged by them, they are justly intitled to the highest degrees of veneration and esteem. It is matter of concern and grief to every serious Christian, that their rewards in this life should but seldom correspond, in any fair proportion, with the worth of their characters, and the importance

of their services. Thanks be to him of whom the whole family is named, their hope is full of glory. It is felt, I am persuaded, by themselves as the heaviest inconvenience of their present situation, that their employment, useful and honourable as it must ever be confessed to be, partakes in some degree of the nature of a worldly business; requiring a labour of the body and a distracting intercourse with the world, which leave little opportunity for private study and solitary meditation. In circumstances so unfriendly to literary improvement, it redounds highly to their praise, that they are so eminently well qualified, as they generally approve themselves to be, to discharge the plain duty of Catechists, with credit to themselves and advantage to the church of God. To deliver the doctrine of the gospel in that plain and general way, which, if it were to meet with no opposition from the disputers of the world, might be sufficient to give it its full effect upon the heart of the hearer. But occasions will from time to time arise, when the truth must be not only taught but defended. The stubborn Infidel will raise objections against the first principles of our faith: and objections must be answered. The restless spirit of scepticism will suggest difficulties in the system, and create doubts about the particulars of the Christian doctrine: difficulties must be removed, and doubts must be satisfied. But above all, the scruples must be composed, which the refinements of a false philosophy, patronized as they are in the present age by men

no less amiable for the general purity of their manners than distinguished by their scientific attainments, will be too apt to raise in the minds of the weaker brethren. And this is the service to which they, whom the indulgence of providence hath released from the more laborious offices of the priesthood, stand peculiarly engaged. To them their more occupied brethren have a right to look up, in these emergencies, for support and succour in the common cause. It is for them to stand forth the champions of the common faith, and the advocates of their order. It is for them to wipe off the aspersions injuriously cast upon the sons of the establishment, as uninformed in the true grounds of the doctrine which they teach, or insincere in the belief of it. To this duty they are indispensably obliged by their providential exemption from work of a harder kind. It is the proper business of the station which is allotted them in Christ's household: and deep will be their shame and insupportable their punishment, if, in the great day of reckoning, it should appear, that they have received the wages of a service, which hath never been performed.

You will easily conjecture, that what hath ledde me into these reflections, is the extraordinary attempt, which hath been lately made, to unsettle the faith and to break up the constitution of every ecclesiastical establishment in Christendom. Such is the avowed object of a recent publication, which bears the title of a *History of the Corruptions* of

of Christianity; among which the catholic doctrine of the Trinity, in the author's opinion, holds a principal place. With what success he hath attacked this fundamental article, and how far he hath been able to invalidate the argument from early and uniform tradition; this reverend assembly will be competent to judge, from the brief view which shall be laid before them, of the account which he attempts to give of the rise and progress of the doctrine in the three first ages, accompanied with specimens of the proofs by which his pretended history, in this part of it, is supported.

I.

THE opinion which he maintains is in general the same which was first, I think, propagated in the last century by Daniel Zuicker, a Prussian divine of the Socinian persuasion; and, upon the authority of that writer, hath been current ever since among the Unitarians of this country. That the doctrine of the Trinity, in the form in which it is now maintained, is of no greater antiquity than the Nicene Council. That it is the result of a gradual corruption of the doctrine of the gospel, which took its rise in an opinion first advanced in the second century by certain converts from the Platonic School; who, expounding the beginning of St. John's gospel by the platonic doctrine of the Logos, ascribed a sort of secondary divinity to our Saviour, affirming that he was no other than the second principle of the platonic triad, who had assumed

assumed a human body to converse with man. That before this innovation, of which Justin Martyr is made the author, the faith of the whole Christian church, but particularly of the church of Jerusalem, was simply and strictly Unitarian. The immediate disciples of the Apostles conceived our Saviour to be a meer man, whose existence commenced in the womb of the virgin; and they thought him in no respect the object of worship. The next succeeding race worshipped him indeed, but they had however no higher notions of his divinity, than those which were maintained by the followers of Arius in the fourth century. In short the first race of Christians, in Dr. Priestley's opinion, were Unitarians in the strictest sense of the word; the second, Arians. As Dr. Priestley follows Zuicker in these extravagant assertions; so the arguments, by which he would support them, are in all essential points the same which were alleged to the same purpose either by that writer or by Simon Episcopus. Episcopus, although he was himself no Socinian, very indiscreetly concurred with the Socinians of his time, in maintaining that the opinion of the meer humanity of Christ had prevailed very generally in the first ages; and was never deemed heretical by the Fathers of the orthodox persuasion; at least in such degree, as to exclude from the communion of the Church. The opinion, I believe, had its rise in no worse principle than the charitable temper of the man, and his just abhorrence of the spirit of persecution, with which Christians of every denomination

were

were in his time too much infected : which is indeed itself of all heresies by far the most malignant, being the most opposite to that general philanthropy, which is the root of all social virtue and the highest ornament of the Christian profession. Episcopus wished, as every good man must wish, to see a general toleration established, which he thought could not be more effectually recommended, than by the example of the harmony which subsisted among Christians in the earliest ages. The force of this example he would naturally think improved, in proportion as the idea of the harmony was heightened ; the idea of the harmony heightened, as the controversies of the first Christians were magnified and multiplied. These sentiments inclined him to credit as historians, the same writers whom as divines he held in little estimation. He gave easy credit to the Unitarian writers, when they represented the differences of opinion in the early churches, as much greater than ever really obtained ; and the tenderness for sectaries, as more than was ever practised ; and while he opposed their doctrine, he vouched their story. The purposes of charity had been better served, without injury to the cause of truth, had the talents of this able writer been employed to set the doctrine of Universal Toleration on its only firm and proper basis : to shew, that although in dubious points of doctrine, the judgment of antiquity, wherever it is clear, must be allowed to be decisive ; yet the just severity of the primitive church towards the refractory heretics, whose visionary doctrines joined with their contempt of apostolic

autho-

authority disgraced the rising community, and obstructed the propagation of the truth, constitutes no example for the controul of fair enquiry, or for the punishment of meer speculative heresy in these later times; by any harsher means than the necessary exclusion of dissenters from the honours and emoluments of national establishments. Had the opinion which he chose to adopt been true, Simon Episcopus, with his scanty knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquities, was but ill qualified to maintain it. False and groundless as it was, his natural acuteness enabled him to furnish the Socinians of his time, whose cause in the doctrinal part he little thought to serve, with the best arguments that have ever been produced on the Unitarian side of the question. Our modern historian, in support of his imaginary progress of opinions from the Unitarian doctrine to the Nicene Faith, hath produced few, if any, arguments which make directly for his purpose, but what are to be found in the writings either of Zuicker or Episcopus. Nor is a single argument to be found in the writings either of Zuicker or Episcopus, which is not unanswerably confuted by our learned Dr. George Bull, afterwards Lord Bishop of St. David's, in three celebrated treatises, which deserve the particular attention of every one, who would take upon him to be either a teacher or an historian of the Christian Faith: the first, *a Defence of the Nicene Faith*; the second, *the Judgment of the Catholic Church, in the first ages, upon the necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is very God*; the third, *the*

*Primitive and Apostolical Tradition concerning the true
Divinity of Jesus Christ.*

It seems very extraordinary, that any one should presume to revive the defeated arguments of Zuicker and Episcopus, without attempting to make them good against the objections of a writer of Dr. Bull's eminence. Nor is it easy to conceive, what apology can be made, for what should seem so gross an insult on the learning and discernment of the age; unless it be, that Dr. Priestley imagines, that although he hath abstained from a particular discussion of Dr. Bull's arguments, he hath in effect answered them, by the new light which he persuades himself he has thrown upon the subject. That by the evidence which he thinks he hath brought of the truth of his own narrative, in every branch of it, he supposes that he hath virtually replied to all objections. That he hath confirmed the assumptions from which Zuicker and Episcopus reasoned, which Dr. Bull pretended to deny: and that by confirming their assumptions he hath made good their arguments, although he may have taken no notice of their learned antagonist. What new illustrations the subject hath received from Dr. Priestley's labours, will best appear from specimens of the arguments by which he would support his three principal assumptions: namely, that the first Christians were Unitarians in the strictest sense of the word; that the deity of Christ was first taught by a platonizing sect; and that the doctrine, which they introduced,

troduced, was the very same, for which, in a later age, Arius was condemned. If his proof of these fundamental propositions should be found to rest upon precarious assumptions, perverted history, misconstrued and misapplied quotations: if his facts should appear to be confuted by his own authorities: and his conclusions to be defeated by his own arguments: if the resemblance between the Christian and the Platonic Trinity should appear to be no mark of corruption in the prevailing opinions: the Catholic Faith, which hath heretofore sustained so many rude assaults, will hardly find its mortal wound in the stroke which Dr. Priestley imagines he hath inflicted.

THE first argument which is produced in support of the first assertion, "that the faith of the first Christians was simply Unitarian," is built upon an assumption, which could it be proved to be true, would indeed render the conclusion obvious and inevitable. "That the doctrine of our Lord's meer humanity is the clear doctrine of the Scriptures, and that the apostles never taught any other*." It will easily be granted, that the apostles never taught the contrary of any doctrine that is clearly delivered in their writings; and that the faith of the first converts was a belief of neither more nor less, than the apostles taught. So that the sense of the Scriptures in any article being once clearly ascertained,

* History of Corruptions, vol. I. p. 6.

the argument from the clear confessed sense of scripture to the preaching of the apostles, and from the preaching of the apostles to the primitive faith, will be firm and valid. But the professed object of our learned adversary's undertaking requires an argument, that should go the contrary way: from the primitive faith to the sense of the Scriptures. It is the professed object of his undertaking, to exhibit a view of the gradual changes of opinions, in order to ascertain the faith of the first ages: and he would ascertain the faith of the first ages, in order to settle the sense of the Scriptures in disputed points. He is therefore not at liberty, to assume any sense of the Scriptures, which, because it is his own, he may be pleased to call the clear sense, for a proof that the original faith was such, as would confirm the sense he wishes to establish. His sense of the Scriptures being not acknowledged by the majority of the Christian church, whatever may be his own judgment of its clearness, it can only pass for a particular interpretation. When this particular interpretation is alleged, in proof that the original faith of the church of Jerusalem, was such as might justify the interpretation; the middle term of the argument is no otherwise confirmed than by an assumption of the principal matter in debate: and so long as the sixth page of the first volume of Dr. Priestley's history shall be extant, the masters of the dialectic art will be at no loss for an example of the circulating syllogism. To Dr. Priestley it may be very clear, that when St. John, speak-

speaking of the Logos, of which he had already affirmed that it was in the beginning, says, "This person" (for that is the natural force of the greek pronoun *ὁυτος*) "This person was in the beginning with God; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made:" it may be very clear to Dr. Priestley, that St. John, speaking of the Logos, as of a person who had been from the beginning, and had done these great things, means to affirm that the Logos is no person; nor is, otherwise than in a figurative sense, to be called an agent in any business: that he means to contradict those, who held that the Logos was any thing more than an attribute of the divine mind; to silence them; to extinguish their profane innovation by his definitive sentence upon the question: and that when he speaks of eternity as belonging to the Logos as a person; it is, that this was the most explicit way, in which he could give the Christian Church to understand, that eternity is only accidental to the Logos, the substance to which it properly belongs, being that Mind of which the Logos itself is only another attribute*. It may be very clear to Dr. Priestley's apprehension, that when St. Paul affirms of Christ, that he is the "image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature, by whom all things were created," and explains in what extent the words "all things" are to be understood, by an enumeration of the constituent parts, and governing

* See Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 10—12.

powers of the Universe ; “ things in heaven and things in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist *;” it may be very clear to Dr. Priestley, that St. Paul in these expressions would be understood to assert, that Christ was nothing more than a man, and was no otherwise the creator of any thing, than as he was the founder of the Christian church. All this may be very clear to Dr. Priestley’s apprehension ; and equal to the clearness of the apprehension, which he imagines he enjoys, that this was the doctrine of the Apostles ; will be the confidence of his persuasion, that it was also the faith of their first converts. But to others, who have not the sagacity to discern, that the true meaning of an inspired writer must be the reverse of the natural and obvious sense of his expressions ; the force of the conclusion, that the primitive christians could not believe our Lord to be more than a meer man, because the apostles had told them he was the creator of the Universe, will be little understood.

ANOTHER argument is built upon a pretended silence of St. John, about the error of those who maintained the meer humanity of Christ †, in his first epistle : in which

* Coloss. i. 15—17.

† Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 10 & 13. and vol. II. p. 485.

he is supposed to censure those, who believed Christ to be a man only in appearance, in the severest manner ; but upon those who believed him to be nothing more than man, the apostle, as he is understood by Dr. Priestley, passes no censure. From which it is to be concluded, that the latter opinion is no error, but the very truth of the gospel.

BUT here the question is, whether the opinion of Christ's meer humanity is really passed over by St. John, as Dr. Priestley supposes, uncensured and unnoticed. This question will be differently resolved, according as different interpretations of the apostles expressions are adopted. This argument therefore is of the same complexion with the former, and labours under the same defect. A particular sense of the epistle is alleged, in proof of a pretended fact ; which fact must itself support the interpretation. Every spirit, says St. John, which confesses " that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God *." That is, says Dr. Priestley, every spirit is of God, that confesses that Jesus Christ is truly a man †. But it should seem, that the proposition that he was truly a man, if he was nothing more than man, is very awkwardly and unnaturally expressed by the phrase of his coming in the flesh. For in what other way was it possible for a meer man to come? The turn of the expression seems to lead to the

* 1 John iv. 2.

† Hist. Corrupt. vol. I. p. 10.

notion of a Being, who had his choice of different ways of coming : a notion which is implied in other passages of holy writ, and is explicitly expressed in a book little inferior in authority to the canonical writings ; in the first epistle of Clemens Romanus ; in a passage of that epistle which Dr. Priestley, somewhat unfortunately for his cause, hath chosen for the basis of an argument of that holy father's heterodoxy. " The sceptre of the majesty of God," says Clemens, " our Lord Christ Jesus, came not in the pomp of pride and arrogance, *although he had it in his power* *." Clemens, it seems, conceived, that the manner of coming was in the power and choice of the person who was to come. St. John's expressions evidently lead to the same notion. It should seem therefore that St. John's assertions, concerning the spirits that maintain or deny that Jesus is come in the flesh, that the one are of God and the other of Anti-christ, were levelled not singly at the heresy of the *Docetæ*, as Dr. Priestley imagines, but equally at that and at another branch of the Gnostic heresy, which divided Jesus Christ into two persons : Jesus, who was supposed to be a meer man, the son of Mary by her husband Joseph ; and the Christ, a divine being, who was considered as the genius, or tutelary angel, of the man ; not however so united with the man, as to constitute one person, or to partake of the man's sufferings. The first epistle of St. John is an asser-

* Chap. xvi.

tion of the doctrine of a true and proper incarnation in opposition to the extravagancies of both these sects. The apostle makes the acknowledgment of the incarnation, in which both an antecedent divinity and an assumed humanity are implied, the criterion by which the true teachers are to be distinguished from the false. And in the positive assertion of the incarnation, and the express censure of the opposite doctrine as anti-christian, he reprobates the notion of Christ's meer humanity in the only sense, in which we have any certain evidence that he lived to see it maintained. It appears therefore that to confess that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh *," and to affirm that Jesus Christ is truly a man, are propositions not perfectly equivalent. Dr. Priestley indeed hath shewn himself very sensible of the difference. He would not otherwise have found it necessary, for the improvement of his argument, in reciting the third verse of the fourth chapter of St. John's first epistle, to change the expressions which he found in the public translation, for others which correspond far less exactly with the greek text. For the words "Jesus Christ is come IN the flesh," Dr. Priestley substitutes these. "Jesus Christ is come OF the flesh †." That he is come IN the flesh, and that he is come OF the flesh, are two very distinct propositions. The one affirms an incarnation; the other a mortal ex-

* 1 John iv. 2. Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα.

† Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 10. lin. 15.

traction. The first is St. John's assertion: the second is Dr. Priestley's. Perhaps Dr. Priestley hath discovered of St. John, as of St. Paul, that his reasoning is sometimes inconclusive*, and his language inaccurate: and he might think it no unwarrantable liberty to correct an expression, which, as not perfectly corresponding with his own system, he could not entirely approve. It would have been but fair, to advertise his readers of so capital an emendation. An emendation for which no support is to be found in the greek text, nor even in the varieties of any MSS. We are informed indeed by Socrates the historian†, (and his testimony is confirmed by the Latin of the vulgate) of a very considerable variety of some of the ancient MSS. But it is such as only serves to prove, that the principal object of this epistle of St. John was understood in the primitive church, to be the confutation of the Cerinthian Gnostics; the sect which divided our Lord into two persons, of which they made Jesus a meer man; differing in this essentially from the *Docetæ*, who made the body of the man Jesus a meer phantom.

AND this view of St. John's epistle receives a further confirmation from the genuine epistles of Ignatius. In these the error of the *Docetæ*, which Dr. Priestley sup-

* " — I think I have shewn that the apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively." Dr. P. Hist. of Corrupt. vol. II. p. 370.

† Lib. 7. c. 32.

poses to be the sole object of St. John's epistle, is indeed particularly censured. But lest in asserting the truth of our Lord's humanity, he should be understood to support the opinion of his meer humanity; the holy father hardly ever mentions Christ, without introducing some explicit assertion of his divinity, or without joining with the name of Christ some epithet in which it is implied.

THE mention of Ignatius having occurred, it were unpardonable not to suggest to the recollection of this learned assembly, one passage in particular in the epistle to the Magnesians, in which the eternal existence of the Word, as a distinct person from the Father, is asserted in terms, which, though highly figurative, are perfectly unequivocal. "There is one God who hath manifested himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his eternal Word, who came not forth from silence *." The name of the Logos led the early fathers to conceive the generation of the Son as an utterance; or at least to speak of it under that figure. Under that figure Ignatius speaks of it in this passage: and he affirms, that no period of silence had preceded the utterance of the eternal Word. Or if it should seem more reasonable to suppose an allusion in these expressions of Ignatius to the *Sige* of the Gnostics,

* Εἰς Θεὸς ἐστὶν ὁ φανερωσας ἑαυτὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὃς ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ λόγος αὐθιγὲς ἐκ ἀποσιγῆς προελθὼν. Ign. ad Magn. §. 8.

the consort of their *Buthos*, upon whom the *Æons* were engendered, and to understand the holy father as maintaining the immediate connection of the Father and the Son, unbroken by the intervention of any such intermediate intelligences, as the impious theogony of the Gnostics interposed; still the Eternity of the Son is asserted. For the passage in this view of it amounts to this disjunctive proposition; "The Son's existence holds not of the Father's by any such remote relation as these fabulous genealogies describe; but he is the eternal Logos of the Paternal Mind." According to either interpretation, the passage contains an evident assertion of the divinity of the Son of God. And this assertion being found in the writings of Ignatius, the familiar friend and companion of the apostles, who suffered martyrdom so early as in the sixteenth year of the second century, and had been appointed to the bishopric of Antioch full thirty years before, it is an unanswerable confutation of our author's confident assertions, that "we find nothing like divinity ascribed to Jesus Christ before Justin Martyr *," and "That all the early fathers speak of Christ as not having existed always †."

WE have seen the sort and fashion of the argument which, in proof of his first assertion, Dr. Priestley builds

* Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 32.

† Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 42.

on Holy Writ. Let us take a view of those which he hath drawn from other writers.

ONE principal argument, "that the primitive church of Jerusalem was properly Unitarian," maintaining the simple humanity of Christ, is "that Athanasius himself " was so far from denying it, that he endeavours to account for it; by saying, *that all the Jews were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a man like themselves, that the Apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper Divinity of Christ* *." The latter clause of the sentence, which contains what Athanasius is supposed to have said, is marked with inverted commas; which should seem to intimate, that it is an exact translation of some passage in the holy fathers writings; and the lower margin of Dr. Priestley's book refers to Athanasius's celebrated piece on the orthodoxy of his predecessor Dionysius. Now in this piece upon the orthodoxy of Dionysius, Athanasius no where, I confess, denies that the primitive church of Jerusalem was Unitarian. Nor on the other hand do I recollect, that Dr. Priestley hath asserted it, in any part of his History of Electricity. The truth is, that in either of these valuable works, the faith of the primitive church of Jerusalem never comes in question. In the defence of Dionysius not a single passage is to be

* Hist. Corrupt. vol. I. p. 12.

found,

found, which may be fairly understood as a tacit confession, that the primitive faith of the church of Jerusalem was Unitarian: much less is there any attempt to account for its supposed heterodoxy. Athanasius says indeed of the Jews of the apostolic age, that is, of the unbelieving Jews (for Athanasius is a writer who calls things by their names, and when he speaks of Jews, means not, as Dr. Priestley would persuade us*, Jewish Christians, except when he sarcastically gives the Arians the name of Jews, as resembling the Jews, in his judgment, in an obstinate denial of the Lord who bought them; but otherwise when he speaks his usual, plain, unfigured language, the unconverted Jews of the apostolic age are they, of whom he says) that they had so little insight into the true meaning of the prophecies, as to look for nothing more than a man in the promised Messiah. He says, that this error of the Jews had been the means of spreading the like mistake among the Gentiles; meaning probably the Proselytes of the gate; who, acknowledging in some degree the divinity of the Jewish scriptures, looked for the completion of the prophecies, and were the first Gentiles to whom the preaching of the apostles was addressed. These Gentiles, with something of the Jewish faith, it may easily be supposed, had imbibed many of the Jewish errors; and among others, as Athanasius imagines, the expectation of a Messiah of mortal extraction. This general

* Hist. of Corrupt. vol. II. p. 486.

mistake,

mistake, he says, made it necessary, that the apostles, in their first public sermons, should insist largely on the miracles of our Saviour's life on earth, before they entered into a detail of the particulars of the Gospel doctrine, or explained what sort of person the promised Messiah was to be, and Jesus was. For their doctrine upon that article was not likely to meet with credit, till their divine commission to teach it was acknowledged, and their Master's general claim to the character of the Messiah, whatever that might be, previously admitted. The example of the apostles practice in this particular is alleged, to shew what prudence requires of every preacher of the gospel; who must allow himself to be determined in the arrangement of his matter, the choice of his topics and the composition of his language, by the degree of previous knowledge and the state of opinions which may actually obtain, among those to whom his instructions are addressed. What the ignorant will most easily apprehend must be first taught. Those points, which are supposed to be most generally misunderstood, must be most particularly explained. And the truth must be conveyed in that language, which may the most evidently shew its disagreement with any false opinions, to which the hearer may be particularly addicted. Athanasius contends, that upon these principles Dionysius was to be justified, if he dwelt more on the topic of our Lord's Humiliation, than on that of his Divinity; the Sabellian heresy being the error with which Dionysius was engaged.

The

The consideration that the Son became man, afforded the most obvious proof that he was not the Father : and the Sabellians were to be convinced that the Word was made flesh, gross, corruptible flesh, before they could be brought to acknowledge that he was God of God. Athanasius shews, that, in the controversy with these heretics, Dionysius was inevitably ledde to the use of expressions, which the Arian party interpreted in their own favour ; though Dionysius always disclaimed the sense, to which his words were wrested. He contends, that to tax Dionysius with a propensity to the Arian party, on account of these expressions, were no less unreasonable and injurious, than it would be to entertain the like suspicion of the apostles themselves ; because they had found it necessary to persuade the Jews, that Jesus had been approved of God by signs and wonders as a man ; before they could hope to persuade them, that he was so much more than man, that his being found in fashion as a man was really the most extraordinary part of his history and character. It is in no other way than this, that Athanasius speaks of the apostles as teaching the Jews the humanity of Christ. The holy father never speaks of any caution which they used in divulging the doctrine of his full divinity ; unless an historian's distribution of the matter of his narrative, or a master's accommodation of his lessons to the previous attainments of his pupils, is to be called a caution of divulging, what, in the natural order of tradition, is to be the last disclosed. Was it ever said of Livy, that
 he

he relates the tragedy of Lucretia's death, from a caution of divulging the expulsion of the Tarquins? Of Porphyry, that he treats of the five words, from a caution of divulging the doctrine of the categories? The beginning of every story must be first told. The easiest part of every science must be first taught. Of the great ability and judgment with which the apostles conducted the first preaching of the gospel; of their happy art in the perspicuous arrangement of their lofty argument; with what readiness they led their Catechumens on from the simplest principles to the highest mysteries; of this consummate ability of the apostles in the capacity of teachers, Athanasius speaks with due commendation. Their caution he never mentions. On the contrary, the rapid progress of their instruction, how they passed at once from the detail of our Lord's life on earth, to the mystery of his Godhead, is one principal branch of his encomium. I wish that Dr. Priestley had produced the passage, in which he thinks the apostles are taxed with caution, and of which he certainly imagines (he would not otherwise have ledde his reader to imagine) he hath given an exact translation.

NEARLY allied to this argument from Athanasius's omission to *deny*, is another from Epiphanius's omission to *assert*. "Epiphanius in his account of the Nazarenes—
 "makes no mention of any of them believing the divi-
 "nity of Christ in any sense of the word*." It is

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. I. p. 8.

granted. Epiphanius, in his account of these ancient heretics*, makes indeed no mention, that they believed the divinity of Christ in any sense of the word. But what is this *no-mention* which Epiphanius makes, and of what importance is it to our author's system? It is only that Epiphanius confesses, that he had no certain information, what the opinion of the Nazarenes might be upon this article. He had described them in general as a sect half Jew half Christian: not Jews, because they had something of a belief in Christ: not Christians, because they lived in bondage to the ritual law. "But concerning Christ," he says, "I cannot say whether they think him a meer man; or affirm, as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary by the Holy Ghost †." It is thus, and thus only, that Epiphanius *makes no mention* of the belief of the Nazarenes in Christ's divinity. But he equally makes no mention of their disbelief. And had it been Dr. Priestley's point to prove, that the Nazarenes held the Nicene Faith upon the subject of the Trinity, he might have alleged, with equal fairness and propriety, Epiphanius's *no-mention* of their heterodoxy.

INDEED that they were believers in our Lord's Divinity were the fairer conclusion from the neutrality of Epipha-

* Hæres. 29.

† Περι Χριστου δε, ουκ οίδα ειπειν, ει και αυλοι τη των προειρημενων περι Κηρινθων και Μηνιδων μοχθηρια αχθεντες, ψιλον ανθρωπον νομιζουσιν· η, καθως η αληθεια εχει, δια πνευματος αγιου γεγεννησθαι εκ Μαρίας διαβεβαιυνται.

nius's evidence. It was little the temper of the age in which Epiphanius lived, it was little the temper of Epiphanius, to think or to speak favourably of those who were deemed heretics. It was rather the practice to aggravate and to multiply their errors, and to villify their characters: to charge them upon the slightest grounds with every enormity both in faith and practice. It is very unlikely that Epiphanius would have been so tender of the reputation of these Nazarenes, as to confess his want of information about their opinions of the nature of Christ, had there been the least ground to suspect, or had there been so much as a suspicion current in his times, although it had been founded only on a general bad opinion of the sect, that they were heretical in this article. A general clamour, or the bare assertion of any earlier writer, would have fixed the imputation, without any nice enquiry into the evidence, by which the charge might be supported. And since Epiphanius confesses, that he had no ground to say, that these Nazarenes held Christ to be a meer man; the presumption is, that he ought to have said, that they affirmed, as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary by the Holy Ghost. But to affirm, as the truth is, that he was begotten of Mary by the Holy Ghost, in Epiphanius's sense of those words, was a full confession of his divinity. So that if the opinions of these Nazarenes be of any importance for ascertaining the primitive faith; and conjectures are to be drawn, concerning their opinions, from Epiphanius's profession

of his want of information ; the fair conjecture is the opposite of Dr. Priestley's ; namely, that the Nazarenes homologated with the church : with the church, as its opinions stood in the age of Epiphanius, when I suppose he will allow it to have been far gone from the primitive purity of his Unitarian faith, with this corrupt church, as Dr. Priestley deems it, his friends the Nazarenes homologated upon the article of Christ's Divinity.

BUT after all, of what importance is the opinion of these Nazarenes ? Or how may the catholic tradition be affected by the singularities of a sect ? Of a sect which lay under the censure of the church as heretical ? Attend, my Reverend Brethren. It is in this that we have been so long, I believe I ought to add, so fatally mistaken. The Nazarenes were never censured ! They were no sectaries ! They were the very first, and because the first, they were the purest, the very best of Christians ! Nazarene was the ancient name of the Jewish Christians * ! Of the first members of the primitive church of Jerusalem, that original, parent church, the mother of us all ; where James the brother of our Lord was bishop ! In the opinions therefore of these Nazarenes, we have the opinions of those first Christians, who received not only the baptismal ablution, but the illumination of the spirit at the hands of the apostles ! You seem to ask me, by what evidence this impor-

* " — the Nazarenes (and the Jewish Christians never went by any other name)." Hist. Corrup. vol. I. p. 8.

tant discovery is confirmed? By no evidence. The thing is not proved. It is asserted. In philosophical subjects Dr. Priestley would be the last to reason from principles assumed without proof. But in divinity and ecclesiastical history, he expects that his own assertion, or that of writers of his own persuasion, however uninformed or prejudiced, should pass with the whole Christian world for proof of the boldest assumptions. The Nazarenes, it is confessed, were the progeny of the first Christians of the church of Jerusalem. But the name of Nazarene, you will bear me witness, was never heard of in the Christian church, as descriptive of the Jewish Christians, before their settlement in the northern parts of Galilee upon the banishment of the Jews and Christians from Jerusalem in the reign of Adrian. *The Hebrews* and *they of the circumcision*, were the earlier names, by which the Jewish converts, who formed the church of Jerusalem, had been distinguished from the Christians of the Gentiles. Their descendants, the Nazarenes, were at first perhaps heretical but in a single article; in maintaining the necessity of the observance of the Mosaic law for the attainment of salvation under the gospel: whereas their ancestors, had indeed themselves adhered to their old law, but had declared against the absurdity of exacting a submission to the ceremonial part of it from the Gentile converts. By degrees, however, these Nazarenes declined so far from the pure faith of that first race of Christians, from which they boasted their descent; that in Jerom's
time

time they were become heretical in that degree, that Jerom considered them as a Jewish sect rather than a Christian. "To this day," says Jerom, "a heresy prevails among the Jews in all the synagogues of the east, which is called that of the Minæi, who commonly go by the Name of Nazarenes: who believe in Christ, the Son of God born of the virgin; and say that he was the person who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again; in whom we ourselves believe. But from a desire of being Jews and Christians both at once, they are neither Jews nor Christians *."

It is rather for the sake of general truth, than for the attainment of victory in the present argument, that I am desirous to maintain the distinction which was ever made, till Zuicker attempted to confound it, between the primitive church of Jerusalem, and the sect of the Nazarenes its heretical offspring. In the trinitarian controversy the distinction is of little importance. Or rather it would be of advantage to the argument of the orthodox party, if our faith needed other support, than that which the plain sense of the scriptures and the whole tenor of ecclesiastical history supply; it would be of singular advantage to our argument, that Dr. Priestley should be able to establish Zuicker's extravagant position, that these Nazarenes were no other than the original members of the He-

* Epist. ad Augustinum de dissidio Petri et Pauli. Tom. III. fol. 155. B. edlt. Froben.

brew church. Whoever they were, their orthodoxy, in the article of our Lord's divinity, is notorious. It is attested by most of the writers of antiquity that mention them. It is acknowledged by Jerom, at the very same time that he taxes them with the grossest heresy in other points. And were no express testimony to be produced, still it would be the fair and probable conclusion, from that very passage of Epiphanius, upon which Dr. Priestley would build the contrary opinion. If therefore it could be proved, that these Nazarenes really were, what Dr. Priestley hath been taught by Zuicker to believe, the first converts of the circumcision; we who maintain the full divinity of Christ, should find in the confession of the Nazarenes the verdict of those first Christians in our favour. But since the fact is, that they were an heretical sect, which arose in the second century from the ashes of the church of Jerusalem; their opinions upon any article are totally insignificant, and can in no way affect the catholic tradition. Still therefore the modern Unitarian would serve his own cause but ill, who should be able to succeed in the attempt to prove, that the meer humanity of Christ was a tenet of the Nazarenes.

THE neutrality of Epiphanius's evidence is however not the whole of the proof, by which our modern historian hath taken the pains to support an assertion so little to his purpose. It is alleged only to corroborate a more direct proof, which is very proper to be produced as another

ther specimen of the sort of argument upon which our author's first proposition rests.

THE Nazarenes, and the Ebionites he tells us were the same people, and held the same tenets*. By the appellation of Ebionites it is confessed a certain sect, which denied the divinity of our Saviour, was originally distinguished. But how is it proved, that these Ebionites were the same with the Nazarenes? By a pretended acknowledgment of Origen and Epiphanius†. It is of great importance, for a just apprehension of the exact force of any writer's arguments, to catch the idioms of his stile. And an attention to this circumstance must be particularly recommended to Dr. Priestley's readers. One of the most striking peculiarities of his language, is a very singular use of the words *acknowledge*, and *acknowledgment*. Acknowledgment, in the usual acceptation of the word, in controversial writing, signifies a writer's avowal of a principle or a fact, which, as making for his adversary's argument, it might have been for his purpose to conceal or to deny, but that the evidence of the thing extorted the confession. But with Dr. Priestley, any expressions which are capable of being drawn by construction and refinement, to a sense that

* Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 7.

† " — both Origen and Epiphanius acknowledge that the Nazarenes and " Ebionites were the same people and held the same tenets." Hist. Corrupt. vol. I. p. 7.

may

may seem but indirectly favourable to his own notions ; are an explicit *acknowledgment* of the writer who uses them, that things actually were, as Dr. Priestley is inclined to represent them. If such expressions of one writer are quoted by another ; they amount to an acknowledgment to the same purpose, on the part of the writer who makes the quotation. On the other hand the acknowledgment of an original writer may sometimes be inferred from a negligent citation. Hath Eusebius, complaining of a total disregard to truth among the sectaries who denied our Lord's Divinity, appealed in confirmation of the charge, to a writer of the second century ; who alleges it against the Unitarians of his own time, as an instance of the most hardened effrontery, that they had the audacity to assert, that their tenets had been originally taught by the Apostles, and maintained by all the Roman bishops in succession to the time of Victor* ? This heavy accusation, thus supported by the testimony of an earlier writer, is a plain *acknowledgment*† on the part of Eusebius, that the Unitarians constantly claimed this high antiquity of their doctrine. And what may seem more paradoxical, this writer's appeal to " certain

* Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 28.

† " It is *acknowledged* by Eusebius, and others, " that the ancient Unitarians " themselves constantly asserted, that their doctrine was the universal opinion of " the Christian church till the time of Victor." Hist. of Corrup. vol. II. p. 486. Compare, vol. I. p. 18, 19.

“ psalms and odes, the compositions of faithful brethren
 “ in the first age, which celebrate the divinity of the
 “ Christ the word of God †,” is only a proof of
 Eusebius’s inability to confute the claim, which by his
 own acknowledgment was set up*. Hath the learned Dr.
 Samuel Clarke, in an inaccurate citation of a passage in
 Origen, made Origen speak of the Unitarians of his time
 as pious persons? This is a candid acknowledgment †,
 on the part of Origen, of the piety of those sectaries;
 whereas Origen says not that they were pious, but that they
 boasted § that they were pious, or affected piety. Piety
 and the affectation of piety belong to opposite characters.
 According to this enlarged use of the word acknowledg-
 ment, it will indeed be very hazardous to deny, but that
 an acknowledgment to any purpose may be found in
 any writer, or be drawn from any words. It is necessary
 therefore to declare, that it is only in the usual mean-
 ing of the word, that I take upon me to aver, that no
 acknowledgment of the supposed identity of the Nazarenes
 and the Ebionites, is to be found either in Origen or

† Ψαλμοὶ δὲ ὅσοι καὶ ὠδαί, ἀδελφῶν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ὑπο πίπτον γραφείσθαι, τὸν λόγον τῆς
 θεῶν Χριστὸν ὑμνοῦσι θεολογούμενους. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 28. Compare Ephes.
 v. 19. Col. iii. 16. James v. 13.

* “ ——— in refuting their pretensions to antiquity, he goes no farther back
 “ than Irenæus and Justin Martyr.” Hist. of Corrup. vol. I. p. 19.

† “ Origen candidly calls these adherents to the strict unity of God pious
 “ persons.” Hist. of Corrup. vol. I. p. 57.

§ ——— πολλὰς φιλοθεῶς εἶναι εὐχόμενος ———

Epiphanius. Origen says, indeed, of the Jewish Christians of his own time, that they were Ebionites *. Not meaning to make any acknowledgment in favour of the proper Ebionites, as no worse heretics than the Nazarenes ; but rather to stigmatise the Nazarenes with an opprobrious appellation. And the only conclusion which is to be drawn from this passage of Origen, is that the word Ebionite had in his time out-grown its original meaning. Which it easily might do ; inasmuch as, by its derivation, it is not naturally descriptive of any particular set of opinions ; but barely expressive of the contempt, in which those who bestowed it, held the knowledge and understanding of the party on which it was bestowed. It was therefore likely to be variously applied at different times, according as one or another folly incurred the contempt either of any particular writer, or of the age in which he flourished. Accordingly it appears from ecclesiastical history, that the use of it was various and indefinite. Sometimes it was the peculiar name of those sects, which denied both the divinity of our Lord and his miraculous conception. Then its meaning was extended to take in another party ; which, admitting the miraculous conception of Jesus, still denied his divinity, and questioned his previous existence. And at last it seems the Nazarenes, whose error was rather a superstitious severity in their practice, than any deficiency in their faith, were included

* Contra Cels. lib. ii.

by Origen in the infamy of the appellation. It was natural indeed for Origen, fond as he was of mystic interpretations of the Jewish scriptures, and possessed with the imagination that every particular of the ritual service, and every occurrence of the Jewish story, was typical of something in the gospel dispensation ; it was natural for Origen, to think meanly of a sect, who held the observance of the letter of the ceremonial law to be an essential part of a Christian's duty. They certainly had little apprehension of the free spirit of the religion which they professed ; and this with Origen would be the surest mark of a low and beggarly understanding. It is in this reproachful appellation, which he alone of all the writers of antiquity hath bestowed upon the Nazarenes, that Dr. Priestley hath discovered his acknowledgment in favour of the Ebionites. For Epiphanius, who is joined with Origen in this acknowledgment, he describes the Nazarenes and the Ebionites as different sects, maintaining different opinions ; except that they agreed in retaining more or less of the Mosaic service.

AMONG other specimens of our author's happy art of turning every thing, by a dexterous interpretation, to his own purpose, it were injustice to the injured memory of Eusebius, not to mention the attempt that is made to shake the credit of his history, by representing the unfairness with which that candid writer is supposed to treat the Unitarians ; when he says, " that Theodotus, who appeared

“ peared about the year 190, was the first who held that
 “ our Saviour was a meer man; when in refuting their
 “ pretensions to antiquity he goes no farther back than
 “ to Irenæus and Justin Martyr, though in his own writ-
 “ ings alone he might have found a refutation of his
 “ assertion*.” It must be confessed, that any one who
 should assert that Theodotus was the first who taught a
 doctrine, which sunk our Lord into the rank of meer
 man, might easily be confuted from the ecclesiastical his-
 tory of Eusebius; in which the Cerinthians and the Ebi-
 onites, who are taxed by all antiquity with that impiety,
 are referred to an earlier period. The truth however
 seems to be, that the doctrine of our Lord’s meer huma-
 nity, like all corruptions, had its stages; that it was car-
 ried by degrees to the height, which it at last attained;
 and that Theodotus, in this article, so far surpassed the
 earlier Heresiarchs, that the merit of being the inventor
 of the meer humanity, in the precise and full meaning of
 the words, is with great propriety and truth ascribed to
 him. When the Cerinthians and the Ebionites affirmed that
 Jesus had no existence previous to Mary’s conception, and
 that he was literally and physically the carpenter’s son;
 it might justly be said of them, that they asserted the meer
 humanity of the Redeemer: especially as it could not be
 foreseen, that the impiety would ever go a greater length
 than this, of ascribing to him an origin meerly human.

* History of Corrupt, vol. I. p. 19.

These

These heretics, however, went no further, as I conceive, than to deny our Lord's Original Divinity: they admitted I know not what unintelligible exaltation of his nature, which took place, as they conceived, upon his ascension, by which he became no less the object of worship, than if his nature had been originally divine. But when a more daring (though I confess a far more consistent) sect arose; denying that our Lord in glory is more than a mortal man, raised, as all the just will one day be, to immortality; or that he is more the object of adoration than Enoch or Elijah: these younger heretics eclipsed the glory of their timid ancestors, and might justly claim the honour of being the first assertors of the meer humanity of Christ; they were indeed the first, who made humanity the whole of his condition. It was undoubtedly in this exalted sense, that the Humanity of Christ was taught by Theodotus. For nothing short of this might serve his purpose; which was, as we learn from Epiphanius, to extenuate the guilt of a renunciation of the faith, which he had made under the terrors of persecution, by setting up a plea, that in renouncing Christ he had not renounced his God, but a man. This plea could be of no service to Theodotus's cause, unless Christ were a man, not only in his origin, but at the time when Theodotus renounced him. It was therefore that sublime doctrine, which is at this day taught in the conventicles of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey, the doctrine of our Lord's meer undeified Humanity, which Theodotus, the learned tanner of Byzantium,

zantium, a deserter of his Lord, and a fugitive from his country, broached at Rome in the end of the second century. This doctrine Dr. Priestley will perhaps find it difficult to trace to any earlier period, or to any more respectable origin. No injury therefore is done to the Unitarian cause, when Theodotus is said to be the first author of the Unitarian doctrine in this exalted, finished, form. But after all, this is not, what Dr. Priestley imagines it to be, the assertion of Eusebius. It is the assertion of a writer cited by Eusebius without any name. It should seem that he was of the Latin church, and that his expressions are to be understood with particular reference to the state of religion in the western world, especially at Rome. Now it was probably true, that Theodotus was the very first, who at Rome, in any sense, taught the meer humanity of Christ. For notwithstanding the corrupt state of the Roman church in later ages, it is notorious that she was the last of all infected with any gross heresy. As for the pretensions of the Unitarians, which it might be incumbent upon Eusebius to refute, they were not simply pretensions to antiquity. The antiquity of the Unitarian doctrine, in a certain form, is confessed. Its antiquity is proved by the express censure which is passed upon it in St. John's writings, both in his first epistle and in his gospel, as a dangerous error which was in being when he wrote. But the pretensions of the Unitarians, which Eusebius contradicts, were pretensions to a *prior* antiquity. The pretence that their own doctrine was original; and the doctrine

doctrine of the church, in the time of Zephyrinus, novel. And in refuting these pretensions, the writer quoted by Eusebius, goes back to the apostolic age: he goes back to those psalms and odes, which seem to be alluded to in the apostolic epistles, and to the books of Holy Writ.

II.

By these specimens a judgment may be formed of the arguments and of the facts, by which our author's first assumption is supported. By exposing the weakness of our author's arguments, and by the proof which hath been produced from the writings of Ignatius, that the divinity of the Son, his full divinity, was acknowledged by the immediate disciples of the apostles (a proof which had not the work been long since done by the learned Bishop Bull, might have been strengthened with a copious collection of passages to the same purpose from Ignatius, Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Hermas, and the authentic acts of the Martyrdom of Polycarp) by the detection of the fallacy of the arguments on the one side, and by the positive proof adduced on the other; our author's notion of the faith of the first Christians, that it was purely Unitarian, is overturned. And if this notion of the first Christians is overturned; the assertion, that the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity was an invention of the second race,

race, falls with it. For what was believed by the first
 race could be no invention of the second. Nor can any
 argument be drawn, from any resemblance that may be
 imagined between the Trinity of the Christian Church, and
 the Three Principles of the Platonists, that the doctrine of
 the apostles was not rightly understood by their first con-
 verts: unless indeed it could be proved (which is the tacit
 assumption upon which this objection is founded) that the
 discoveries of revelation and the investigations of philo-
 sophy may never coincide. But why is it to be supposed
 that nothing might be a part of an inspired teacher's doc-
 trine, which had been taught before by wise men, who
 were not inspired? Were every iota of the Gospel Doc-
 trine, to be found in the writings of the Greek philoso-
 phers, this would not be sufficient to set aside the preten-
 sions of the first preachers of Christianity to a divine com-
 mission. The just conclusion from so perfect an agree-
 ment would only be, that for the great importance of
 these doctrines to the manners of mankind, it had pleased
 God to make discoveries to all men by revelation, to
 which a few only could attain by abstract reasoning.
 The case indeed is far otherwise. It is ever to be re-
 membered, for the mortification of man's pride, and to
 the praise of God's mercy, that "when the world by
 "wisdom knew not God," when philosophy had made its
 utmost efforts, not entirely without success, but with
 little general advantage, "it pleased God by the foolish-
 ness of preaching," by a method of instruction, which in

the article of religious information, hath abolished the distinction between the philosopher and the idiot, "to save them that believe." But had our supposed case actually obtained, had revelation discovered nothing more to all than reason had previously taught a few, still to teach all and to teach a few is so different a business, that the previous attainments of philosophers would have afforded no objection against the pretensions of the first preachers of the gospel, sufficient to overturn the evidence by which their claim to a divine commission is supported. Much less may a resemblance, more or less exact, between faith and philosophy in single articles, create a presumption, that those articles of faith, of which certain philosophical opinions seem to carry a resemblance, made no part of the doctrine which those inspired teachers taught. The resemblance may seem indeed a wonderful fact, which may justly draw the attention of the serious and inquisitive. And if it should be deemed incredible, as well it may, that reason, in her utmost strength, should ever ascend so high, as to attain even to a distant glimpse of truths, which have ever been esteemed the most mysterious discoveries of revelation: it will become a question of the highest curiosity and importance, to determine by what means the Platonic school came by those notions of the Godhead, which, had they been of a later date than the commencement of Christianity, might have passed for a very mild corruption of the Christian faith; but being in truth much older, have all the appearance of a near, though

though very imperfect view, of the doctrine which was afterwards current in the Christian church.

THE enquiry becomes more important, when it is discovered, that these notions were by no means peculiar to the Platonic school: that the Platonists pretended to be no more than the expositors of a more antient doctrine: which is traced from Plato to Parmenides: from Parmenides to his masters of the Pythagorean sect: from the Pythagoreans to Orpheus, the earliest of the Grecian mystagogues: from Orpheus to the secret lore of the Egyptian priests, in which the foundations of the Orphic theology were laid. Similar notions of a triple principle prevailed in the Persian and Chaldean theology; and vestiges even of the worship of a Trinity were discernible in the Roman superstition in a very late age. This worship the Romans received from their Trojan ancestors. For the Trojans brought it with them into Italy from Phrygia. In Phrygia it was introduced by Dardanus, so early as in the ninth century after Noah's flood. Dardanus carried it with him from Samothrace; where the personages, that were the objects of it, were worshipped under the Hebrew name of the Cabirim. Who these Cabirim might be, hath been matter of unsuccessful enquiry to many learned men. The utmost that is known with certainty is, that they were originally Three, and were called by way of eminence, the Great or Mighty Ones: for that is the import of the Hebrew name. And of the like im-

port is their Latin appellation, *Penates*. *Dii per quos penitus spiramus, per quos habemus corpus, per quos rationem animi possidemus* *. *Dii qui sunt intrinsecus, atque in intimis penetralibus celi* †. Thus the joint worship of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the Triad of the Roman Capitol, is traced to that of the **THREE MIGHTY ONES** in Samothrace ‡; which was established in that island, at what precise time it is impossible to determine, but earlier, if Eusebius may be credited, than the days of Abraham.

THE notion therefore of a Trinity, more or less removed from the purity of the Christian faith, is found to have been a leading principle in all the antient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular belief of it appear even in the abominable rites of idolatrous worship. If reason was insufficient for this great discovery, what could be the means of information, but what the Platonists themselves assign, Θεοπαράδοτος Θεολογία. “A Theology delivered from the Gods.” i. e. A Revelation. This is the account which Platonists, who were no Christians, have given of the origin of their master’s doctrine. But from what revelation could they derive their information, who lived before the Christian, and had no light from the Mosaic?

* Macrob. Saturnal. lib. III. c. 4.

† Varro apud Arnob. lib. III. p. 123. Lugd. Bat. 1651.

‡ — Tarquinius Demarati Corinthii filius, — *Samothraciis religionibus mysticè imbutus*, uno templo ac sub eodem tecto, numina memorata conjungit. Macrob. Saturnal. lib. III. c. 4.

For whatever some of the early fathers may have imagined, there is no evidence that Plato or Pythagoras were at all acquainted with the Mosaic writings; not to insist, that the worship of a Trinity is traced to an earlier age than that of Plato or Pythagoras, or even of Moses. Their information could be only drawn from traditions founded upon earlier revelations: from scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed; that creed, which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate*. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is rather confirmed than discredited by the suffrage of the heathen sages: since the resemblance of the Christian faith and the Pagan philosophy in this article, when fairly interpreted, appears to be nothing less than the consent of the latest and the earliest revelations.

III.

OUR author's assumption, that the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity was an innovation of the Platonic Christians of the second century, being overthrown by direct proof, that this pretended innovation was a part of the faith of the first Christians: all oblique and secondary arguments, that might otherwise create a presumption in

* "——what Socrates said of him, what Plato writ, and the rest of the
" heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of
" Revelation, after the Sun of it was set in the race of Noah." Dryden's Preface to *Religio Laici*.

our author's favour, are rendered wholly insignificant. To Dr. Priestley it seems a circumstance of great importance, that these early writers "sometimes drop the personification of the Logos (which in his opinion had been their first step towards the deification of our Saviour*) and speak of it as the meer attribute of God†." This he imputes to the difficulty, with which new opinions lay hold upon the mind, and to the natural prevalence of good sense, which is such that it will in all cases often get the better of imagination‡. Facts themselves should be established, before consequences are deduced from them. Let us therefore consider the example, by which this assertion is supported.

THEOPHILUS of Antioch says, "that when God said, *Let us make man*, he spake to nothing but his own Logos, or Wisdom§." It must be confessed, that the example is happily chosen. It is clear that in this passage of Theophilus, as it is expressed in Dr. Priestley's translation, the Logos is described as *nothing but* the Wisdom of God: nothing but *His Own* Wisdom. His own Wisdom must be that internal Wisdom, which is a power of his own mind, a property of his own person: and to say that God spake to "Nothing but his own Wisdom," is to say, that he spake to no one but himself. Dr. Priestley methinks hath spared to make the use he might have done of this passage of Theophilus; which seems not only to be

* Hist. of Corrup. part. I. sect. 2.

† Hist. of Corrup. vol. I. p. 35.

‡ Ibid. § Ibid.

an instance in which Theophilus drops the personification of the Logos in his own writings ; but to prove, that as far as the interpretation of the Old Testament is of any importance, the authority of this learned and antient bishop of Antioch stands with the Unitarian scheme. This learned bishop tells us, that the writers of the Old Testament, if ever they seem to allude to a plurality of persons in the Godhead, speak figuratively, and are to be understood accordingly. The allusion is perhaps nowhere stronger, than in those words of Moses in the book of Genesis, " God said, Let us make." God not only speaks; " God said : " but God speaks in the plural number ; " Let us make : " as though persons were addressed, who were to take part with the speaker in the business to be done. Theophilus, the celebrated bishop of Antioch ; Theophilus so respectable for his antiquity, his piety, and his learning ; Theophilus cautions us, not to be over confident of the consequences which we draw from this rigid exposition of the sacred writer's words. Theophilus affirms, that the expression is purely figurative ; signifying only that before man was made, the purpose of making him arose, and was contemplated, in the Divine intellect. The expression describes an internal deliberation of the Divine mind concerning the intended work ; just as the private thoughts and purposes of a man are sometimes expressed under the figure of a discourse passing within himself. All this Theophilus affirms in Dr. Priestley's english. Nothing of this Theophilus affirms speaking
for

for himself in his own language*, ἐκ ἄλλω δε τινι εἰρηκε Ποιησωμεν, ἀλλ' ἢ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Λογῷ, καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ Σοφίᾳ. The "Nothing but" of Dr. Priestley's english conveys quite another idea than the ἐκ ἄλλω τινι ἀλλ' ἢ of Theophilus's greek. The Logos and the Wisdom, as different names of one thing, are connected by the disjunctive *Or* in Dr. Priestley's english; as names of different things they are connected by the copulative *And*, [καὶ,] in Theophilus's greek. The exact rendering of Theophilus's words is to this effect. "It was to no other person" (that is the proper force of ἐκ ἄλλω τινι, *haud alii cuiquam*) "It was to no other person that he said, *Let us make*, than to "his own Word, and to his own Wisdom." τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Λογῷ καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ Σοφίᾳ. The repetition of the demonstrative article with the pronoun, as well as the connection by the copulative, clearly shews that Λογος and Σοφία, the Word and the Wisdom, are different things. Hath Dr. Priestley written a history of the Corruptions of Christianity, and hath he yet to learn, that in the language of Theophilus and of the best writers of his age, the Word and the Wisdom (Λογος and Σοφία) are used as proper names of the second and third persons of the Trinity? If his own reading in those early fathers hath been so confined, that not one of the clear unequivocal instances that occur in Theophilus himself, in Origen, in Tatian, and Irenæus, hath ever fallen under his own proper observation; he might

* Ad. Autolyc. p. 114. Oxon. 1684.

have

have been informed of this peculiarity of their stile, from the notes which accompany the text of Theophilus in Bp. Fell's edition printed at Oxford in 1684; which, as it is inserted in his catalogue* of principal editions, it is possible he may have seen. Theophilus's assertion, that God spake to no other person than his Word and his Wisdom, is an assertion that he spake to persons of no less dignity, than the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is an assertion of the catholic exposition of the text, and of the consequences deduced from it, in opposition to the Jewish expositors of that age; who contended, that this speech of God was addressed to the angels. Theophilus therefore in this passage hath not dropped the personification of the Logos; that is, he hath not receded from the assertion of the personality of the Word. He affirms not, that the Logos, so often mentioned by himself and other writers as a person, is no person but meerly the divine attribute of Wisdom; which, in the usual language of Grammarians, were rather to assert the personification than to drop it: but by the names of the Word and the Wisdom he distinguishes two different persons; saying, these were the persons to whom God spake.

* Dr. Priestley's Preface, p. xxii.

IV.

WE have seen by what sort of arguments our author's two first assertions, "That the faith of the first age was Unitarian, and that the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity was an invention of the second," are supported. If he hath succeeded no better in the proof of his third assertion, concerning the Platonic Christians of the second age, the inventors, as he would have it, of our Lord's divinity; that the divinity which they set up was only of that secondary sort, which was admitted by the Arians, including neither eternity, nor any proper necessity of existence, having the meer name of divinity, without any thing of the real form: if the proof of this third assertion should be found to be equally infirm with that of the other two, his notion of the gradual progress of opinions from the meer Unitarian doctrine to the Arian, and from the Arian doctrine to the Athanasian faith, must be deemed a meer dream or fiction in every part.

It must be acknowledged, that the first converts from the Platonic school, took advantage of the resemblance between the evangelic and the platonic doctrine on the subject of the Godhead, to apply the principles of their old philosophy to the explication and the confirmation of the articles of their faith. They defended it by arguments drawn from platonic principles; they even propounded it

it in platonic language : which to themselves and their contemporaries was the most familiar and intellisible, that could be employed upon so abstruse a subject. Nor was this practice to be condemned, so long as the scriptures and the catholic traditions were made the test of truth ; so long as revelation was not pressed into the service of philosophy, by any accommodation of the pure evangelical doctrine to preconceived opinions ; but philosophy was made to exert her powers in the defence of revelation, and to lend her language to be the vehicle of its sacred truths. These might be deemed the most promising means that could be employed, for bringing over more converts from the pagan schools ; and the writers, who evangelized in this philosophical stile, conceived perhaps, that they had the sanction of an apostle's example, " for becoming all things to all men, that they might gain some."

BUT whatever might be the purity of their intentions, they were guilty of an unpardonable deviation from the primitive faith, if it be true that they maintained the doctrine which Dr. Priestley ascribes to them ; namely that the Son is the meer contingent creature of the Father's will and power ; a production which hath not always existed *. We have seen that this was not the belief of the first age ; and if it is to be found in the writings of the second,

* Hist. Corrup. vol. I. p. 42, 44, 62.

it could indeed be nothing better than a corruption of religion by philosophy.

To judge of the truth of a writer's proposition, and even to divine of what sort the arguments will be, which he will allege in support of it, it is sometimes sufficient that the precise tenour of it be clearly understood. They were converts from Platonism, they were Christians who with their Christianity are supposed to have retained their Platonism, to whom Dr. Priestley ascribes the notion of a Logos which had not always existed, but began to be, like other creatures, by an act of the Father's will. After all that Dr. Priestley hath written, about the resemblance between the Ecclesiastical and the Platonic Trinity; he hath yet it seems to learn, that a created Logos, a Logos which had ever not existed, was no less an absurdity in the academy, than it is an impiety in the church. The converts from platonism must have renounced their philosophy, before they could be the authors of this absurd, this monstrous opinion. As the notion that this doctrine took its rise with them, betrays a total ignorance of the genuine principles of their school; it is easy to foresee, that the arguments brought in support of it, can only be founded in gross misconstructions of their language. That this is indeed the case will be abundantly proved by a single instance.

ATHE-

ATHENAGORAS is one of the writers to whom Dr. Priestley refers for a proof of his assertion. The passage which he cites, as affording a proof that Athenagoras believed not that Christ had always existed, or that the Logos had always existed, otherwise than as an attribute of the Divine mind; happens to be one, in which that philosophical father asserts the eternity of the Logos, as a distinct person, in the most explicit terms; and argues in support of it from a certain relation of the Logos to the paternal intellect, which the name, Logos, implies. "Athenagoras," says Dr. Priestley, "calls Christ the first production of the Father; but says, he was not always actually produced; for that from the beginning God, being an eternal mind, had reason in himself, being from eternity rational*." But let us hear Athenagoras himself†. "If," says he, "endowed as you are with superior understanding" (he addresses the emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and Lucius Aurelius Commodus) "it should occur to you to enquire, whence it is that he is called a Son, I will explain it in a few words. [It is] that he is to the Father [as] the first offspring. Not as something made" (This is the true sense of the words, in which Dr. Priestley imagines that it is said that Christ was not always produced) "Not as something made. For God, being an eternal in-

* Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 36.

† See the entire Greek passage, p. 56.

telligence,

“telligence, himself from the beginning had the Logos
 “in himself, being eternally rational.” The learned
 father undertakes to explain to the philosophical emperors,
 why the Second Person in the ever blessed Trinity is called
 the Son. He tells them, that this name is expressive of a
 certain relation, which the Second Person stands in to the
 First, who is called the Father; which relation is that of
 the eldest born. But lest the relation of primigeniture
 should lead to the notion of a proper physical generation,
 which would sink the Son into the rank of a creature (for
 generation is only a particular way in which certain
 things are made) he says, that the birth or generation
 of the Son, is not to be understood as if he were some-
 thing that had been ever made: as if his being had
 commenced, at any certain time, by the inducement of
 a form upon a præexisting material. For that is the
 general notion of a making; although in common speech
 it is usual to say of those things only that they are made,
 to which the form is given at once by the hand of the
 artist. When the form is gradually brought on by the plastic
 powers of nature, the secret process is called Generation;
 which is therefore but a sort of making, and differs from
 that which is usually called a Making, in the means
 only by which the end is compassed. Athenagoras there-
 fore gives the emperors a caution, not to understand by
 the generation of the Son, a generation in the literal sense
 of the word, which comes under the general notion
 of a Making: not to understand by it any thing like
 that

that natural process, by which the bodies of plants and animals, and some other substances are carried forward from a potential to an actual existence. The generation of the Son cannot be understood, he says, of any such production, because his actual existence is from eternity. This, he says, is the necessary consequence of the confessed eternity of the Father. The Logos hath existed from eternity, in union with the Father; "because God, being eternally rational, ever had the Logos in himself." The sense is, that the personal subsistence of a divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and seems to be founded in scripture, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the Divine intellect exerted on itself; from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections, which have ever been, the ever-active Intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son. Athenagoras having thus proved that the generation of the Son can be only a figurative generation; proceeds to explain the figure, by assigning the particular transaction to which he conceives it to allude. Which is no commencement of the Son's existence; not even that energy of the paternal mind in which the existence of the Son originates: but the going forth
of

of the Son to exert his powers in the business of creation. "He is, says Athenagoras, to the Father as the first offspring; not as something that was ever made; but that he went forth to be idea and energy in material substances; which lay yet in chaos, unqualified and undistinguished, the dense promiscuously mingled with the rare, waiting the operation of the active spirit to impregnate them with form*." Here, indeed, the Son of God is called an idea, and an energy. But it is not, that he is understood to be an unsubstantial idea, or energy, of the paternal mind; but a living idea, energising on the matter of the universe, to stamp it with the forms of things. And his generation is affirmed to be no commencement of his existence, but the first exertion of his powers in the production of external substances: or to use a more Platonic phrase, the first projection of his energies. *προβολὴ τῶν ἐνεργημάτων.*

If any thing be justly reprehensible in the notions of the Platonic Christians, it is this conceit, which seems to be common to Athenagoras with them all, and is a key

* εἰ δὲ, δι' ὑπερβολὴν συνσεως, σκοπεῖν ὑμῖν ἐπεισιν, ὁ παῖς τι βλεταί· ἐρῶ δια βραχέων, πρότερον γεννημα εἶναι τῷ πατρὶ· ἐκ ὧς γενομενον· ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁ Θεός, νῦν αἰδώς ὢν, εἶχεν αὐτός ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν λόγον, αἰδώς λογικὸς ὢν· ἀλλ' ὡς τῶν ὑλικῶν συμπαντῶν ἀποὶ φύσεως καὶ γῆς ὀχρείας ὑποκειμένων δικήν, μεμιγμένων τῶν παχυμερεστέρων πρὸς τὰ κρυφώτερα, ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἰδέα καὶ ἐνεργεία εἶναι προελθῶν. There seems to be some corruption in the words *καὶ γῆς*. The general sense of the passage cannot but be very clear, to those to whom the imagery of the Platonists is in any degree familiar.

to the meaning of many obscure passages in their writings, that the external display of the powers of the Son in the business of creation, is the thing intended, in the scripture language, under the figure of his generation. A conceit which seems to have no certain foundation in Holy Writ, and no authority in the opinions and the doctrines of the preceding age: and it seems to have betrayed some of those who were the most wedded to it, into the use of a very improper language; as if a new relation had taken place between the First and the Second Person, when the creative powers were first exerted. The indiscretion of presuming to affix a determinate meaning upon a figurative expression, of which no particular exposition can be safely drawn from Holy Writ, is in some degree atoned by the object, which these writers had in view. It was evidently their intention, to guard the expressions of Scripture from misconstruction. They thought to lead men away from the notion of a literal generation, by assigning to the figure a particular meaning, which it might naturally bear, and which, whether it was the true sense of it or no, seemed not to clash with any explicit part of the revelation. The conversion of an attribute into a person, whatever Dr. Priestley may imagine, is a notion to which they were entire strangers. They held indeed that the existence of the Son necessarily and inseparably attached to the attributes of the paternal mind: insomuch that the Father could no more be without the Son, than without his own attributes. But

H

that

that the Son had been a meer attribute, before he became a person ; or that the paternal attributes were older than the Son's personal existence, is a doctrine which they would have heard with horror and amazement. With horror, as Christians ; with amazement, as philosophers!

It is but justice to Dr. Priestley to acknowledge, what indeed he ought to have acknowledged for himself, that in this misinterpretation of the Platonic fathers, he is not original: he hath upon his side the respectable authority of two very eminent divines of the Roman church ; Petavius and Huetius : which however is no more than a single authority ; the pious bishop of Avanches, upon this subject, being but the echo of the very learned jesuit. It is not the season to revive past quarrels ; one is therefore unwilling to recollect the motives, which induced Petavius to belie his better knowledge, and to charge the philosophical fathers of the second century with errors, which he was too learned not to know no Platonist could entertain. But at the time when Petavius wrote, the minds of the most enlightened and liberal of the Romanists were so ill reconciled to the separation of the reformed churches from their communion, that it was the fashion for the champions of the papal superstition, in order to weaken the support which they were sensible the protestant cause received from the writings of the fathers of the three first centuries, to take every method to derogate from their authority. And this it was thought
could

could in no way be more effectually done, than by bringing them under a suspicion of misbelief, in doctrines which the reformed churches and the Roman hold in equal reverence. The learned Petavius considered not, that he sacrificed the cause of our common Christianity to the private views of his own church, in thus attempting to corrupt the stream of tradition at the very fountain head. His arguments, which Dr. Priestley hath attempted to revive, are examined and confuted, with great erudition and ability, by the excellent bishop Bull in the third section of his Defence of the Nicene Faith.

THE last specimen which I shall produce of Dr. Priestley's manner of arguing from authorities, shall be taken from his short account of the word *Trinity* *. This word, he says, first made its appearance in the writings of Theophilus bishop of Antioch. But Dr. Priestley thinks "it is not clear that by it he meant a Trinity consisting of the same persons, that it was afterwards made to consist of:" and he affirms that it is certain, a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead was not meant by Theophilus. And thus Theophilus, for the second time, is brought to give evidence against his own opinions. But whence arises the certainty, that a Trinity of persons is not meant by Theophilus? From no other circumstance that I can perceive, but that the word Trinity is expressly expounded in the text of Theophilus by

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. I. p. 99.

God, his Word, and his Wisdom. "The three days," says Theophilus, "which preceded the creation of the luminaries, were types of the Trinity; of God, and of his Word, and of his Wisdom†." It hath already been observed that the words God, his Word and his Wisdom, in the phraseology of Theophilus's age, were used for Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is unnecessary in this assembly to cite the numerous examples that occur in Theophilus, Tatian, Irenæus, and Origen. It may be more useful to explain the grounds upon which, as I conceive, this language was adopted.

WE have seen that the Platonic Fathers, although they held the eternity of the Second Person no less than of the First, imagined that his generation signified a particular transaction, which took place at a certain time. And it is probable that, although they held the eternity of the Holy Spirit, yet they conceived that the procession expressed some projection of his energies, which took place at the same time with that, which they understood to be the generation of the Son. They imagined that the Second Person was not properly a Son, before that event, which they understood by his generation: and they would equally imagine that the Third was not properly the Spirit, before the event which they understood by his procession.

† ὡσαύτως καὶ αἱ τρεῖς ἡμέραι [προ] τῶν φωτῶν γεγενῆσθαι, τυποὶ εἰσιν τῆς τριάδος· τὸ Θεοῦ, καὶ τὸ Λόγου αὐτοῦ, καὶ τῆς Σοφίας αὐτοῦ. Theoph. ad Autol. lib. 2. p. 106. Oxon. 1684. I have taken the liberty to insert the preposition *προ*, the want of it being evidently an omission.

But

But they conceived, that the Second Person had ever been the Word; and that the Third had ever been the Wisdom. Of the First they conceived that he was not properly a Father, before the Second was a Son; although he ever had been God. I have already given my opinion of these subtle distinctions: for which the best apology (for an apology they need) is the evident good intention of the writers, who first maintained them. But upon these distinctions, whether just or visionary, their phraseology seems to have been founded. They thought the names of God, the Word, and the Wisdom, which express of each of the three divine persons, what each hath always been, were appellations to be generally preferred to those of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which express relations only, which, according to their fancy, had not always been. And this explains the reason, why they used the word, God, as the peculiar appellation of the Father. It was not that they scrupled to ascribe an equal divinity to all the Three Persons; but that rejecting the simpler nomenclature founded on relations, they desired to call each person by the name which they conceived to be most descriptive of his essence: and of the essence of the Father they could find no name at all descriptive but the general appellation, God.

THE three names therefore, God, the Word, and the Wisdom, in the language of Theophilus's age, were understood to be equivalent to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:

Ghost: and when Theophilus expounds the word Trinity, by God, his Word, and his Wisdom, it is just the same thing as if he had rendered it by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How this exposition may create a doubt, whether Theophilus's Trinity consisted of the same persons with the Trinity of later ages; how it may produce a certainty! that Theophilus's was not a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, it is not my business to explain. Dr. Priestley should have opened this mystery: but he hath not condescended to give his readers any further light, than his own naked assertion, that the thing is, as he would chuse that it should be; which in this, as in other cases, he seems to think may pass for a sufficient proof of any of the paradoxes of his own party.

PERHAPS his doubt about the real meaning of the word, and his confident persuasion that it was no Trinity of persons in the Godhead, have arisen from the obscurity of which he complains, in the subsequent part of the sentence, where the Word and the Wisdom are mentioned again. It is indeed but reasonable to suppose, that these words are used in the same sense in both places. But in this second place, the Wisdom, Dr. Priestley might imagine could be no Divine Person. For in Dr. Priestley's english the latter clause of the sentence runs thus. "The fourth day is the type of Man, who needs Light, that the Word may be God, and the Man Wisdom." This passage, Dr. Priestley observes, is "certainly obscure enough."

enough." You all, I am persuaded, agree in the truth of his remark ; and you will equally agree in mine, if I venture to say much more of the latter clause ; that it is certainly unintelligible—in Dr. Priestley's translation. But turn to the original—The whole obscurity will vanish ; and instead of it, you will find that striking perspicuity of language, which is the characteristic beauty of Theophilus's style. Having said that the three first days of creation were types of the Trinity, Theophilus adds, " That the fourth was a type of Man, who is in need of Light. That there might be, or, So that there is, God, the Word, the Wisdom, Man*." This last clause is nothing but an enumeration of all that had been mentioned, as typified in the first four days of creation. To explain how these days were types of what they are supposed to represent, might indeed be difficult : but in the age of Theophilus, the great art of interpreting the Old Testament was supposed to consist in making types out of every thing. The sense, however, of the writer is expressed with the greatest perspicuity. It is evident from his own exposition of the word, that he speaks of no other Trinity than Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It appears therefore from the testimony of Theophilus, that the word was used at first in no other sense, than that which it hath borne

* ὡσαύτως καὶ αἱ τρεῖς ἡμέραι [προ] των φωτηρων γεγονυιαι, τυποι εἰσιν τῆς τριάδος· τὸ Θεὸς, καὶ τὸ Λόγος αὐτὸς, καὶ τῆς Σοφίας αὐτὸς. τέλει δὲ τυπὸς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος· ὁ προσδεὴς τὸ φῶς· ἵνα ᾖ Θεός, Λόγος, Σοφία, Ἄνθρωπος. Ad Autol. lib. 2. p. 106. Oxon. 1685.

in later ages. The word hath not changed its original meaning; but in this, as in most of his assertions, Dr. Priestley is confuted by his own authorities.

I FEEL no satisfaction in detecting the weaknesses of this learned writer's argument, but what arises from a consciousness, that it is a discharge of some part of the duty, which I owe to the church of God. It is a mortifying proof of the infirmity of the human mind, in the highest improvement of its faculties in the present life, that such fallacies in reasoning, such misconstructions of authorities, such distorted views of facts and opinions, should be found in the writings of a man, to whom of all men of the present age some branches of the experimental sciences are the most indebted.

V.

MAY I be permitted to close this long address, with a word of exhortation to the younger members of the priesthood.

THE actual state of things is such, that, to the greater part of those who engage in it, our holy profession must furnish the means of a subsistence. The consequence is, that we are obliged to enter upon it in an early season of our lives, when it is well if we have previously laid a good foundation in our minds of the very first principles
of

of the doctrine of Christ: and a due proficiency in theological studies, must be the attainment of future industry. To the novitiates therefore of our order, considered as unfinished Theologians, I take the liberty to recommend the diligent study of the works of bishop Bull; especially of his writings on the subject of the Trinity, with the annotations of Grabe his learned editor. In these they will find an exact and critical detail of the opinions of the fathers of the three first centuries. They will find the faith of the church of England confirmed, and proved to be the original faith, by a tradition traced with certainty to the apostolic age. And they will find every argument refuted, which the Unitarian party have yet been able to form upon their own views of the opinions of the earliest ages.

THE study of bishop Bull, if leisure is not wanting, may be followed, or accompanied, with advantage by that of the ecclesiastical historians: of the original historians, I mean, Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodorit. As for modern histories, the use of them, without a previous acquaintance with the ancient writers, is rather to be discouraged than recommended. By those who are already learned in the subject, they may be redde indeed with emolument; as commentaries on the antient text of history, as it lies in the original writers, which may occasionally throw light upon dark and doubtful questions. But as books of elementary instruction for beginners, they

I

will

will generally be pernicious. For it will too often be found to be the case, that the narrative is accommodated, not through premeditated fraud, but in the meer error of prejudice, either to the private opinions of the writer, or to the interests of his sect. Of this Dr. Priestley's work is a striking example. If purity of intention, joined with the brightest parts, were a security against the power of prejudice and self-delusion, no writer would be more worthy of implicit credit, than Dr. Priestley: whereas no work was perhaps ever sent abroad, under the title of a History, containing less of truth than his, in proportion to its volume.

FROM ecclesiastical history the student learns what the faith of the church hath at all times been; and he is enabled to separate the pure doctrine of the first age from all later innovations: a matter at all times of the highest moment; but of particular importance in the present juncture, when the whole ability and learning of the Unitarian party is exerted, to wrest from us the argument from tradition. The importance of the argument from tradition rests upon the supposed infallibility of the first preachers. The opinion of their infallibility rests upon the belief of their divine illumination. The consequence of a divine illumination is, that their whole doctrine must have been, not indeed obvious to the human understanding, not within the reach of its unassisted powers to discover, but consonant to the highest reason, nor too difficult

ficult, when propounded, for the human apprehension ; and though not free from paradoxes, certainly not encumbered with contradictions. No tradition therefore may avail to prove, that any manifest contradiction, that a part, for instance, is equal to the whole, or that the same thing in the same respect is at the same time one and many, was a part of the apostolic doctrine ; if the inspiration of the apostles be admitted. Or, if it should appear, from the evidence of a tradition which cannot reasonably be questioned, that the apostles really required the belief of contradictions under the name of mysteries ; their pretence to inspiration will be refuted, and the credit of their doctrine overturned. For as the evidence of intuition is far superior to that of sense, no external evidence may establish the belief of a contradiction. Since no testimony that a contradiction is, should be allowed to overpower the intuitive conviction, that it cannot be. An inquiry therefore into the reasonableness of our faith, as well as just views of its history, is of great importance.

THE reasonableness of our faith will be best understood from the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries. And among these, those wicked Platonists of the second age, who, in Dr. Priestley's judgment, sowed the seeds of the antichristian corruption, deserve particular attention ; for the great perspicuity with which in general they expound the faith, and the great ability

with which they defend it. And as these corrupters brought with them into the church the language of their school (I say the language, for its opinions, except so far as they harmonized with the gospel, they had the ingenuity to retract*) the writings of the pagan philosophers, particularly the platonists, will be of considerable use to the Christian student; as they will bring him more acquainted with a phraseology, which is used even by the Christian platonists: nor for this purpose only, but for some degree of light which they will throw upon the argument. The error of the later platonists was, that they warped the genuine doctrine of the original tradition, their Θεοπαράδοτος Θεολογία, to a form in which it might be in friendship with the popular idolatry. Their writings therefore are a mine, in which the true metal is indeed mingled with a dross of heterogeneous substances; but yet the richness of the ore is such, as may well repay the cost and trouble of the separation. Or if leisure should be wanting for a minute study of a subject, which may seem but of a secondary importance; it will at least be expedient, I had almost said it will be necessary, to know so much of the opinions of heathen antiquity, as is to be learned from those authentic documents, which the industry of the indefatigable Cudworth hath collected and arranged with great judgment, in his Intellectual System.

* See the beginning of Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho, and Theophil. ad Autol. lib. 2.

THE advantage to be expected from these deep researches, is not any insight into the manner in which the three Divine Persons are united; a knowledge which is indeed too high for man, perhaps for angels; which in our present condition at least is not to be attained, and ought not to be sought. But that just apprehension of the Scripture doctrine, which will shew that it is not one of those things that "no miracles can prove*," will be the certain fruit of the studies recommended. They will lead us to see the Scripture doctrine in its true light: that it is an imperfect discovery, not a contradiction. That the Catholic Faith is not properly compared with the tale of Mahomet's Journey to the third heaven; his conferences there while the pitcher of water fell; or even with the doctrine of Transubstantiation†: that even the Athanasian Creed is something very different from a set "of contradictions, the most direct which any person the most skilled in Logic might draw up‡." A censure, which could hardly have fallen from our learned adversary, Unitarian as he is, had he but known so common a book as Dr. Waterland's History and Paraphrase. In the opinions of the pagan platonists, we have in some degree an experimental proof, that this abstruse doctrine cannot

* "They are things which no miracles can prove," says Dr. Priestley in his Address to Mr. Gibbons, speaking of the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Atonement. See Hist. Corrupt. vol. II. p. 461.

† Hist. of Corrupt. vol. II. p. 461.

‡ Hist. of Corrupt. vol. I. p. 87.

be the absurdity, which it seems to those who misunderstand it. Would Plato, would Porphyry, would even Plotinus have believed the miracles of Mahomet, or the doctrine of Transubstantiation? But they all believed a doctrine, which so far at least resembles the Nicene, as to be loaded with the same or greater difficulties, and liable to the same or greater objections. By every one who will thus combine the studies of Divinity and Philosophy, the truth of Plato's observation, I am persuaded, will be soon experienced; that to those who apply themselves to these speculations, with a humble disposition to be taught, rather than with the unphilosophical and irreligious habit of deciding hastily upon the first view of difficulties, what at first appeared the most incredible, will in the end seem the most evident and certain; and maxims, which seemed at first indisputable, will be discarded*.

AN extensive erudition in Pagan as well as Christian antiquity, joined with a critical understanding of the sacred text, is that which hath so long enabled the clergy of the church of England, to take the lead among Protestants as the apologists of the apostolic faith and discipline; and to baffle the united strength of their adversaries of all denominations. God forbid, that through an indolence, which would be unpardonable, we should ever lose the superiority, which we have so long maintained.

* Plato in Epist. ad Dionys.

The acquisition of learning is indeed laborious, but the fruit is sweet. The private satisfaction that it must give to every minister of the Church of England, to understand, that his engagements to the establishment are perfectly consistent with his higher obligations to God and Christ, is alone sufficient to repay the labour of the studies, which afford this comfortable conviction, and contribute to its daily growth. But private satisfaction is not the end of our pursuits. The nobler end is public edification. It is a maxim of Dr. Priestley's, that every man, who in his conscience dissents from the established church, is obliged in conscience to be a declared dissenter. I honour the generosity of the sentiment

————— φιλον ἐν
 Φιλεῖν· πόλι δ' ἐχθρον, ἀ-
 τ' ἐχθρος ἐων, λυκοῖο δίκαν ὑποθευσόμαι,
 Ἀλλ' ἀλλότῃ παλῶν, ὁδοῖς σκολιαῖς————

It ought much more to be the sentiment of every one who stands with the received doctrine, to be a declared Church-man. If he would reap any solid advantage from the purity of his faith, he must be an open and avowed believer; lest if he confess not Christ, his God and Saviour, before men, he should not be at last confessed before the angels of heaven. If this confession be the general duty of every man who feels conviction; it is the particular duty of every one who hath been called to the Evangelists office. He holds the authority of his commission for no
 other

other purpose, but to bear witness to the truth. A conviction that it is the truth, founded on a deep investigation of the subject, will supply him with firmness to persevere in the glorious attestation, unawed by the abilities of his antagonists, undaunted by obloquy, unmoved by ridicule: which seem to be the trials which God hath appointed, instead of persecution, in the present age, to prove the sincerity and patience of the faithful. The advocate of that sound form of words, which was originally delivered to the saints, hath to expect that his opinions will be the open jest of the Unitarian party: that his sincerity will be called in question; or if "a bare *possibility* of his being in earnest*" be charitably admitted, the misfortune of his education will be lamented, and his prejudices deplored. All this insult will not alarm nor discompose him. He will rather glory in the recollection, that his adherence to the faith of the first ages hath provoked it. The conviction which he will all the while enjoy, that his philosophy is Plato's, and his creed St. John's, will alleviate the mortification he might otherwise feel in differing from Dr. Priestley; nor suffer him to think the evil insupportable, although the consequence of this dissent should be, that he must share with the excellent bishop of Worcester, in Dr. Priestley's "Pity and Indignation†." Not indeed that he will hold any good

* Hist. of Corrup. vol. II. p. 471.

† "To see such men as Bp. Hurd in this class of writers [the defenders of the establishment] when he is qualified to class with Tillotson, Hoadley, and Clarke, equally excites one's pity and indignation." Hist. of Corrup. vol. II. p. 471.
man's

man's good opinion cheap; or esteem it a light evil, that a conscientious attachment to the truth should expose him to the reproach of those, whose talents he will revere, and whose virtues he will love. But he will esteem it but a temporary evil: an evil which Providence in mercy hath appointed for the trial of his faith, and for the improvement of his habits of disinterested obedience: an evil therefore which the spirit of a Christian will support; suffering neither the misfortune to deject, nor the injury to irritate. Adoring the wisdom of that mysterious dispensation, which, to heighten human virtue, ordains that it should often miss the reward, which disinterested virtue ever covets most; of that dispensation, which makes even error and rash judgment a useful part of the discipline of the present life; he will not disgrace the cause, which he should support, by any uncharitable conclusions concerning the actual motives, or the future doom, of those whose opinions he may think it his duty to oppose: nor in the necessary asperity of debate will he hastily retaliate their unjust aspersions. He will admit much more than a possibility, that Dr. Priestley may be in earnest in all his misinterpretations of the scriptures and the fathers, and in all his misrepresentations of facts. He will allow that it is impossible that Dr. Priestley should be not in earnest upon these subjects; or that any consideration should induce him, to represent things otherwise than as they really appear to him. Appearances to the contrary, however strong, he will refer to the fascinating power of prejudice, and to

the delusive practice of *looking through* authors *, which the historian of religious opinions ought to have redde. Though truth in these controversies can be only on one side ; he will indulge, and he will avow, the charitable opinion, that sincerity may be on both. And he will enjoy the reflection, that by an equal sincerity, through the power of that blood, which was shed equally for all, both parties may at last find equal mercy. In the transport of this holy hope he will anticipate that glorious consummation, when faith shall be absorbed in knowledge, and the fire of controversy for ever quenched. When the same generous zeal for God and Truth, which too often, in this world of folly and confusion, sets those at widest variance whom the similitude of virtuous feelings should the most unite, shall be the cement of an indissoluble friendship; when the innumerable multitude of all nations, kindreds, and people (why should I not add of all sects and parties) assembled round the throne shall, like the first Christians, be of one soul, and one mind, giving praise with one consent to Him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain to redeem them by his Blood.

* "I have taken a good deal of pains to read, or at least look carefully through, many of the most capital works of the antient Christian writers."—
Dr. Priestley's Preface, p. xvii.

A P P E N D I X.

WHILE these sheets were in preparation for the press, Dr. Priestley was challenged by a writer in the Monthly Review for June (who the critic may be I know not—he appears to be learned in Ecclesiastical History, and I am well pleased to find that his views of Dr. Priestley's argument in many particulars agree with mine) Dr. Priestley was challenged by this writer, to point out the particular passages in Origen's writings, in which he had conceived an acknowledgment of the identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites to be contained. Dr. Priestley's reply hath already made its appearance; in which he is reduced to the necessity of confessing, that he hath no such passage to produce*. Still however he maintains, that the identity of these sectaries, although not acknowledged by Origen, is to be inferred from Origen, Epiphanius, and Eusebius†. But this is still affirmed without reference to the particular passages, either of Origen or of Eusebius, from which the inference is to be drawn: nor is the reader informed, in which of Origen's works that *description* is to be found of the opinions of the Ebionites, which represents them as the same opinions which others ascribe to the Nazarenes, and makes it appear that Origen had no idea of any difference between the two sects‡. Dr. Priestley makes a reference indeed to the 13th tract of Origen's Commentary upon St. Matthew's Gospel§: but this is for another purpose; for proof, of what needs indeed no proof at all, that the Ebionites were of two sorts; the one

* See Dr. Priestley's Reply to the Monthly Review, p. 5.

† See Corrections and Additions, &c. at the end of the Reply.

‡ Reply, p. 5.

§ See the References, p. 4, of the Reply.

admitting, the other denying the miraculous conception, while both rejected the divinity of the Redeemer. What proof of this secondary proposition is to be found in the 13th of the Exegetics upon St. Matthew's Gospel, I know not. I suspect an error of the press; and that the reference should have been to the 16th of the Exegetics in the 3d section, which treats of the cure of the blind near Jericho. In that transaction, as St. Mark relates it, Origen imagines that the two divisions of the primitive church, the Gentile and the Jewish converts, are allegorised. Jericho is the world. The multitudes which follow our Lord from Jericho, are the converts from paganism to the true faith; who forsake the world to follow Christ. The blind beggar is a half-converted Jew, addicted to the Ebionæan heresy; whose eyes are at last opened to the truth of the Gospel. If this is not the reference which Dr. Priestley meant to make, let me advise him to adopt it in the amended edition of his work, which, he seems to promise. Besides that the very purport of the exposition, which places the characteristic distinction between the Gentile and the Jew convert in a belief or disbelief of Christ's divinity, may seem to militate strongly for his favourite opinion, that the whole Hebrew church was Unitarian; he will find one sentence in particular in this discourse, or a part at least of one sentence, which, I am persuaded, he will think worthy to be written in characters of gold.

καὶ ἔπαινον ἰδὼς τῶν ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων πιστευόντων εἰς τὸ Ἰησοῦν τὸν περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας πιστῶν, ὅτε μὲν ἐκ Μαρίας καὶ Ἰωσήφ υἱομενῶν αὐτοῦ εἶναι, ὅτε μὲν ἐκ Μαρίας μόνῃς καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτε μὲν καὶ μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ θεολογίας, ὁφείη κ. τ. λ. —

“ — and when you consider, what belief they of the Jewish race, who believe in Jesus, entertain of the Redeemer; “ some thinking that he took his being from Mary and “ Joseph, some indeed from Mary only and the Divine Spirit, “ but still without any belief of his Divinity: you will understand, &c.” These expressions taken by themselves may seem to intimate, that the sect of the Ebionites, in its two great branches, embraced, in the time of Origen, the whole body of the Hebrew Christians. But let the learned reader attentively peruse the whole discourse, let him consider

sider well the subject and the stile; and he will perceive, that as the subject is not history, neither is the stile of the sedate historic kind. The object of the discourse is to *spiritualize* a plain story. An attempt in which the imagination of the writer is always busier than the judgment: and the stile, even in allusion to historical facts, is generally rather warm than exact, and is apt to border on the vehement and the exaggerated. This is in some degree the case in this discourse of Origen's. His expressions are therefore to be interpreted by the known tenor of Ecclesiastical History: Ecclesiastical History is not to be accommodated to his expressions. That the Jewish converts were remarkably prone to the Ebionæan heresy, from which the Gentile churches in general were pure, is the most that can be concluded from this passage, strengthened as it might be with another, somewhat to the same purpose, in the Commentaries upon St. John's Gospel. But what if it were proved, that the whole sect of the Nazarenes was absorbed in the Ebionæan heresy in the days of Origen? What evidence would that afford of the identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites in earlier times? And even that identity, if it were proved, what evidence would it afford, that the church of Jerusalem had been originally Unitarian under her first bishops of the circumcision?

BUT however indecisive the pretended testimony of Origen may be; Dr. Priestley makes himself very sure that Epiphanius is on his side. "Epiphanius expressly says, that Ebion held 'the same opinion with the Nazarenes*.'" The only inference to be made from this assertion, is this: that Dr. Priestley hath never troubled himself to read more of Epiphanius's account of the Ebionites, than the first eleven words of the first sentence. Had he redde the first sentence to the end, he would have found that Ebion, although he arose from the school of the Nazarenes, and held similar opinions, preached also other doctrines, of which he was the first inventor. Among these novelties by the consent of all antiquity, though

* Reply, p. 4.

not with Dr. Priestley's leave, we place the meer humanity of Christ, with or without the miraculous conception.

STILL Dr. Priestley triumphs in the silence of Hegesippus, and the concessions of Justin Martyr. It were not difficult, to shew the insufficiency of his reply to the learned Reviewer of his work, upon both these articles: but I forbear to put my sickle into another's harvest. That it may not be thought strange, that these cogent arguments should have been suffered to pass unnoticed in my own animadversions, and that the omission may not be imputed to the wrong cause, it seems proper to declare the true reason of it, which was this: I wished to confine my strictures to those arguments, in which the learned author seemed to me the most original. In these two he is the least so. Both are stale. The one is from Zuicker's mint: the other from Episcopi. Both have been canvassed with great accuracy, and both have been effectually overturned, by that excellent Divine, whom I have so often found occasion to mention, and who never must be mentioned without praise, the learned and pious bishop Bull.

4 OCT 58

, T H E E N D .